

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, The Honorable Mitchell Sharp, announced today that the government has extended Canadian participation in the United Nations Force in Cyprus for a further period of six months. Canada's contingent may however be reduced to approximately 490 personnel from its May 1973 level of 580. This will be part of an overall 25 percent reduction in the strength of the Force.

These reductions are part of a plan, being developed by United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim in consultation with the Cypriot authorities, concerning the future role and responsibilities of the Force. These changes would involve a restructuring of the Force to emphasize measures such as negotiation and persuasion while reducing reliance on the deployment of interposing UN troops on the ground. The Greek and Turkish Cypriots could then assume greater responsibility themselves in ensuring the maintenance of peace on the Island.

Mr. Sharp stressed Canadian support for the United Nations Force. He noted that the inability to achieve military deconfrontation between the armed forces of the two sides clearly demonstrated the continuing requirement for a UN presence if inter-communal violence is to be avoided.

The Force is composed of personnel from Australia, Austria, Britain, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden as well as Canada. Canada provides the second largest contingent. The Canadian unit currently serving in Cyprus is the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment which is normally stationed at CFB Galetown.